

Salim Musalim Al Barami

Middle-East Managing Partner, Brain Tower



DOB: September 26, 1977

Marital status: Married

Education:

2001 - Graduate Gemologist, Gemological Institute of America, London, UK

2016 - Executive Master in Business Administration, Hult International Business School, London, UK

Spoken Languages: Arabic & English

Interests & Hobbies: Traveling, Working out, Photography

Sector: Services

Ownership: Private

Established in: 2008

With an MBA and more than ten years of experience in entrepreneurship and investment, Salim Al Barami is a well-established figure in the Omani business world. Having built businesses and experienced all of the challenges that entails, he now works on helping other entrepreneurs to do the same.

After first specializing in gemology, Salim Al Barami began his career by working in London and then came back to Oman to start his own business - a jewelry retail store called Plucina Fawasil Trading, which he built from scratch. Unfortunately, when the cyclone Gonu hit Oman in 2007, his store was severely affected and he decided to sell the business instead of starting all over again. It was time to move into a different field.

The next step for Mr. Al Barami was to establish a real estate fund in partnership with colleagues who were also his friends. It turned out to be a profitable venture as a result of the boom that was happening in the real estate sector at the time. Then, in 2008, he branched out further and founded the Middle East affiliate of the Belgian company BrainTower, a consultancy business which focuses mostly on sales and marketing.

Mr. Al Barami noticed that most companies in the Middle East still operated in a traditional, increasingly old fashioned way, failing to adapt to the fast changes that are happening in the rest of the world. Some companies are ignorant of the changes happening around them, and some can see the changes happening, but aren't yet ready enough to accept the more drastic changes. BrainTower's goal is to help these companies to upgrade their knowledge and their practices in order to align to the new ways of doing business. Having spent a lot of his life abroad in the West, Mr. Al Barami has the advantage of a broader perspective on how businesses are run in both parts of the world, which helps him come up with better solutions to bridge this gap.

In his role as a managing partner, Salim Al Barami focuses primarily on reorganization and growth strategies. One of the challenges he faces with his clients is that in the Middle East, most companies still do not accept the idea of bringing in an outsider for a couple of months or years or for whatever the period of time is required to make all the necessary changes to the company. This usually happens, he says, with first and second generation Middle Eastern family businesses, where the founders tend to be very protective of the company, which they see as one of their sons or daughters, and of its proprietary information.

According to Mr. Al Barami, the main thing that differentiates BrainTower from other consultancy firms is the level of expertise of its employees. The company only hires highly experienced people who have worked in their business field for at least ten years. For example, he says, *"if the client is in retail or manufacturing, the consultant provided is someone who has been in that sector, who has experience in that business, so he has been on the other side of the equation."* In the beginning, BrainTower had a full staff working in the office, but as the global trend changed, the company needed to change with it and adapt its own practices. Today, it makes full use of digital workplace tools and methods.

Currently, BrainTower has a list of experts, mainly located in Europe, and whenever someone requests consultancy services from one of them, they are able to get to Oman within two days to work with their client. The knowledge transfer works both ways, however. The different regional partners are in contact on a weekly basis, sharing information consulting each other on international projects. For example, companies in Europe may want to understand more about the culture in the Middle East, especially in the retail market, or they may want to understand more about Ramadan, or how to promote certain products.

In Oman, BrainTower focuses mainly on marketing and sales consultancy. Mr. Al Barami is proud of BrainTower's track record of successful projects over the years. In one case, a full restructuring of a local company led to a 17 percent increase in turnover. BrainTower's managing partner can point to many other examples, as the company only accepts projects

My message to youth:

My message to youth:
We are moving from the industrial era to the information era. Look into this change that is happening, and find a career that will adapt to tomorrow, not today.

My message about Oman:

Oman is a stable country. The economy isn't as fast as Dubai, but if you're looking for long term projects in the Middle East, Oman would be your best bet.



that it is comfortable with and knows it can excel at, and it never accepts projects from outside of its areas of expertise.

Salim Al Barami is also the co-founder of BizHub Middle East, the SME and entrepreneurship development arm of Al Jazeera Global Services & Investments and one of Oman's first business incubators. BizHub's goal is to help entrepreneurs make their ideas a reality by providing them with training and resources for establishing and growing their businesses.

Oman is, in the opinion of Mr. Al Barami, a very stable country and an excellent place to start a long term project. He sees tourism as one of the most promising sectors in Oman, and he also believes there is strong potential for fisheries, but much needed regulations have to be put in place first in order for businesses in the sector to run smoothly.

Driven by his passion and hunger for change, Salim Al Barami has big goals for the future. As the world is moving from the industrial era to the information and technology era, he wants to contribute to bringing this change to the Middle East faster, so that the local entrepreneurs and businesses can benefit from the innovation that's happening globally. In the end, he believes an active and innovative SME sector in Oman will contribute significantly to the development of the whole nation.